

AdvanceMent Guidelines

Tips for a successful mentoring experience

Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg



**UNI
FREIBURG**



Greeting

Dear mentors, mentees and those interested in mentoring,

Thank you for your interest in AdvanceMent Freiburg, the mentoring program for doctoral candidates and postdoctoral researchers. At the University of Freiburg, we recognise that we are training our scientists for academic careers as well as for leading positions in business and society. It is important for us to accompany our doctoral candidates and postdoctoral researchers on their way and to support them in their further development. With its three program lines for academic (@academia) and non-academic career paths (@newpathways) as well as a flexible line for international postdocs, AdvanceMent Freiburg makes a significant contribution to supporting young scientists in the strategic development of their careers.

If we were able to recruit you as a mentor, we would like to thank you in advance for your extraordinary commitment! Mentoring cannot take place without you. This guide will help you - mentors and mentees alike - to prepare for mentoring and to make your mentoring experience a success. The guide also offers all other interested parties an insight into the goals and opportunities of mentoring as well as into the work of AdvanceMent Freiburg. We wish you an informative and inspiring read and all participants in the mentoring program an exciting, eventful, and successful mentoring period!

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1. Introduction to Mentoring

1.1 What is mentoring?



Mentoring refers to the focused support and encouragement of a person (mentee) by an experienced professional or manager (mentor). The mentors support the mentees in their professional self-discovery process over a fixed period of time, advise them on career planning, and provide constructive feedback on their performance and skills. They impart important (informal) knowledge

about career requirements, structures and processes in science or industry, explain unwritten "rules of the game" and facilitate access to career-relevant networks. Mentoring is a proven and effective personnel development tool. It is a learning process in which both partners can broaden their horizons of experience.

The mentoring program AdvanceMent Freiburg offers the space to orient oneself professionally and to prepare and successfully carry out the next career step through reflection, feedback, further qualification, and networking as well as mutual support in the peer group.

What mentoring *isn't*

Mentoring is not a job. The mentors offer their time and experience on a voluntary basis. It is important to value this commitment and to make constructive use of this offer through a proactive attitude on the part of the mentees.

Mentoring differs from the supervisory relationship during doctoral studies. In a supervisory relationship, mentoring in some sense is certainly inherent. Ideally, in relationships of this kind, information is exchanged on structures and rules of conduct in the respective field of work, helpful recommendations are made, and scientific contacts are arranged. Nevertheless, the goal of the supervisory relationship is the successful completion of the doctorate. Career and personal development are not in the foreground in this context. Professors can only rarely – with exceptions in certain disciplines – provide advice for the non-academic job market. Finally, due to dependencies between supervisors and doctoral candidates, the

necessary conditions of a formal mentoring relationship, such as openness or freedom from hierarchy, do not exist. The supervisory relationship within the doctoral program can therefore be usefully supplemented by a mentoring partnership, depending on the goals of the mentees.

Mentoring differs from professional counseling and coaching and cannot replace it. Coaches and professional counselors usually have completed training that enables them to shape the coaching process and expand the perception and action alternatives of the person being coached. They adopt a neutral perspective and attitude. The personal experiences or own contacts of the coach or the consultant are not part of the process.

Mentoring is not a life-long task. The duration of a mentoring relationship is limited in time and, in the case of AdvanceMent (approximately 14 months), limited to the term of the mentoring round. Within this period, regular contact takes place (recommended interval: every four to eight weeks). Mentoring partners may decide to continue their relationship informally at the end of the program. However, it is recommended at this point to take on new roles and determine an end to the mentoring relationship.

1.2 Framework and features of mentoring

There are several conditions that are fundamental to a successful mentoring relationship and should be considered by mentors and mentees alike.

Freedom from hierarchy and competition and voluntary nature: Mentoring takes place outside of dependent relationships, involves no authority to issue directives, and is a voluntary exchange between two people with different levels of experience. The goal is to exchange ideas on a level playing field.

Transparency, commitment and a fixed duration: The duration of a mentoring relationship is limited in time. Within this period, regular contact takes place, which provides the conditions for support and development to take place. The program structure and the existence of support networks are visible and transparent.

Confidentiality and openness: Open communication, mutual goodwill, respect, and trust are necessary prerequisites for mentoring. The mentoring discussions are strictly confidential. In them, a personal exchange takes place about professional experience, leadership behavior, corporate culture,

informal knowledge and subtle messages. Mentoring conversations offer the opportunity to deal with those topics that are not usually addressed, but nevertheless have a significant impact. For example, uncertainties, mistakes and weaknesses can also be dealt with openly.

Reciprocity and exchange: Mentoring is a two-way process of give and take. Mentors can also benefit from this exchange for their personal and professional development, e.g. by being challenged in their professional view, learning about new perspectives and previously unnoticed problem situations, and gaining insights into the situation of the next generation.

1.3 Contents of mentoring and possible topics

Mentoring is a process that centers on the fostered relationship between mentor and mentee. It is a mutual learning process over time with space for exchange, learning, and experimentation as well as for the development of new skills and competencies.

Mentoring is all about...

- Exchange of experience and participation: The mentors allow the mentees to gain insights into their experiences, successes and failures, and their knowledge of how to act. They provide the opportunity to experience everyday professional life (i.e. through shadowing at the workplace) and, if possible, may take the mentees with them to meetings, appointments, networking events, or conferences.
- Advising: The mentors advise the mentees on concrete professional questions. They support them in finding solutions to problems and making difficult decisions.
- Knowledge transfer: Mentors provide knowledge about the structures and informal „rules of the game“ in their field.
- Encouragement: Mentors encourage their mentees to make their own experiences. Mentors can serve as a partner to practice how to approach certain situations, discuss possible outcomes and then take stock of how the experience played out.
- Networking: The mentors give the mentees tips on how to make and maintain contacts. They bring mentees into their own network and provide professional contacts.
- Feedback: Mentors and mentees give each other constructive feedback about their outward presentation and impact. Mentors help

mentees to recognize their own strengths and abilities and help them to apply their skills in a targeted manner.

The concrete **topics** discussed in mentoring are dependent on individual conditions and a conclusive list is not possible. Each mentee brings his or her own questions to the mentoring experience. Each partnership and each peer group agrees upon which topics will ultimately be discussed. Frequently discussed topics, however, include:

- Planning a career path: Current situation, professional perspectives and defining goals
- Polishing your scientific or professional profile
- Analysing strengths and weaknesses
- Structures, processes and unwritten rules of respective industries or in academia
- Strategies for increasing your visibility within the scientific community or in a non-academic context
- Time and task management
- Requirements for managers
- Communicating with colleagues and higher-ups
- Work-life-balance, blending family and career, dual careers
- Application and negotiation strategies
- Strategic networking
- Administration and committee work
- Applying for research grants
- Publications

2. One-on-One Mentoring: A Guide for Collaboration

For one-on-one mentoring to succeed, mentors and mentees must be aware of their respective roles and responsibilities, as well as the opportunities and possibilities that mentoring offers them. These are presented in this chapter. In our reference materials (see Notes on Materials), you will find practical guides, checklists, and templates to help you design the mentoring process.

2.1 Benefits and opportunities for mentees

Mentoring provides an opportunity for mentees to develop both personally and professionally.

Personal development: During mentoring, mentees learn to recognize their strengths and competencies, present them to others and expand them. During conversations with their mentor, they can analyse their personal situation and sharpen their judgement.

Orientation: The mentoring process helps to clarify career prospects and development opportunities. Mentees can discuss new approaches and options and the steps required to achieve them. Through the mentors, mentees learn about other perspectives and experiences, thereby broadening their horizons.

Career development: During the mentoring process, mentees gain greater clarity about their professional and personal goals and have the opportunity to develop individual strategies for their career development.

Developing new skills: During the mentoring process, mentees can gain insights into the mentors' everyday professional work as well as into topics such as leadership culture, dealing with employees, or preparing new publications or research projects.

New contacts: Through mentors and networking events, mentees can make relevant professional contacts and gain access to networks that could be professionally beneficial.

2.2 Benefits and opportunities for mentors

Mentoring is a beneficial process for both partners. Mentors can also benefit from the process.

Sharing experiences: Mentors will find that mentees are an interested and open audience when it comes to sharing experiences and values.

Self-reflection: Through the questions and perspectives of the mentees, mentors are encouraged to reflect on their own professional biography and working style.

Ideas: Through the exchange with mentees, mentors come into contact with new ideas, views and behaviors that broaden their own horizons. The conscious examination of certain topics, such as power and influence, can also lead to new insights.

Feedback: The mentees see the mentors' behavior as outsiders. Mentors thus have the opportunity to receive honest feedback. Confidentiality and openness as inherent characteristics of mentoring provide a suitable framework for this.

Strengthening skills: By practicing active listening and counseling, mentors can develop their own skills in supporting emerging talent.

Contact: Through their mentees, mentors gain contact with a younger generation and insights into their world of thought and experience.

Polishing their image: Mentors strengthen their reputation as good (scientific) leaders and promoters of the next generation.

2.3 Roles and tasks of mentees

Mentoring focuses on the learning and development process of the mentees. They are the main actors in this process and are themselves responsible for what they learn in the mentoring partnership. This requires certain competencies and also places concrete demands on the mentees.

Set goals: Mentees formulate concrete goals for the mentoring process. It is their job to reflect on their own plans and where they need support. At the beginning of the mentoring process, they discuss their objectives with their

mentors and agree on specific topics and measures that will help them achieve their goals.

Maintain contact: It is the responsibility of the mentees to maintain contact and inform their mentors about their current situation. If they have specific and urgent questions, they contact their mentor between their planned meetings (as long as this is agreed upon by both parties).

Be active: The mentees prepare the mentoring conversations, clearly define the topics they want to discuss and what input they would like from their mentor. Additionally, they might come up with initial ideas on how to solve their current problems. They take notes on the outcomes of the discussion. By sharing these notes with the mentor, the mentee enables both parties to make sure they are on the same page.

Be open: The more open the mentees are and the more they share their challenges and uncertainties with the mentors, the more they can benefit from mentoring. This gives them the chance to learn from difficult situations. On the one hand, this requires trusting cooperation, but on the other hand, it can itself help to create trust.

Take action: The mentees can benefit most from mentoring if, after a phase of discussion and clarification, they then put the suggestions and ideas into action. Mentoring will not offer any ready-made solutions, but rather the opportunity to actively shape personal development according to one's own values and goals with the help of the mentors' suggestions.

Checklist for mentees: How do I design my mentoring process?

- ✓ Clearly define goals and expectations (see Mentoring-Agreement)
- ✓ Prepare for and take notes on mentoring meetings (see Notes on and preparation for mentoring conversations)
- ✓ Keep appointments and maintain contact
- ✓ Bring your own solutions to the table
- ✓ Implement strategies for reaching your goals
- ✓ Inform mentors about your current situation and developments
- ✓ Be open – also to constructive criticism and feedback
- ✓ Show appreciation and respect

2.4 Roles and tasks of mentors

Mentors can take on various roles that arise from the nature of mentoring: They can advise and impart knowledge, provide support and open doors, and act as role models. It is important that they perform their function for a limited period of time and that the mentees are not in a dependent relationship with them.

Advising and knowledge transfer: Mentors share their own assessment of their mentees' current situation and plans for the future, advise them and consider with them how plans can be put into practice. This can also be practiced in role play. They also contribute their own experience and knowledge of informal structures and "rules of the game". The mentees' knowledge can also be broadened by mentors allowing mentees to participate in meetings or discussions or involving them in current projects or work processes. The mentees can then experience how the mentors or others act and communicate in certain situations.

Provide support: Mentors can help develop the strengths of mentees. Using their experiences, they may be able to identify which skills are particularly embodied by their mentee. They make them aware of these strengths and consider together with them in which situations they can use and build on them.

Enable experiences: It is most effective to learn by experience. Mentors can support their mentees by encouraging them to have their own experiences and to serve as sparring-partners in preparing for these experiences. They can discuss the approach with their mentees, discuss possible consequences and then evaluate the experience gained. This can bring up questions that are not readily asked in other professional contexts, such as what forms of behavior and communication are appropriate for certain events and groups.

Career advice: Another aspect of mentoring is accompanying mentees in their career development and supporting them in decisions and career transitions. Mentors can talk to their mentees about their goals and consider the steps that can be taken to achieve them, what the possible challenges are, and how they might be overcome.

Open doors: Mentors provide their mentees with helpful contacts. They introduce their mentees to networks and discuss with them how they can make and maintain useful contacts themselves.

Self-reflection: In the course of mentoring, mentors repeatedly reflect on their own role and whether they are providing the appropriate level of assistance. If the mentees bring issues with which the mentors cannot help from their experience and knowledge, they should communicate these limitations. Some issues go beyond the scope of mentoring and are better clarified in professional coaching or psychosocial counseling.

Checklist for mentors: How can you support your mentee?

- ✓ Actively listen and ask open questions (see Checklist: systemic questions for mentors).
- ✓ Confirm and encourage: Support your mentee in realistically assessing and acknowledging his or her own abilities.
- ✓ Advise: Let your mentee find his or her own solutions by asking specific questions, or work out various possible solutions together and discuss their feasibility. If necessary, contribute your own views and experiences.
- ✓ Look ahead: Make your mentee aware of potential challenges.
- ✓ Practice: Practice new behaviors with your mentee through conversation or role-playing. Ask your mentee what he or she has learned and how he or she plans to act in similar situations in the future.
- ✓ Assist: Show sympathy in case of mistakes and difficulties, encourage your mentee and look for solutions together with him or her.

The decisive factor in all these actions is that you do not provide your mentee with ready-made solutions, but support him or her in recognizing and implementing his or her own options for action. In case of problems and conflicts, the program management of AdvanceMent Freiburg will be happy to advise you.

3. The Peer Group: Reaching Goals Together

Collaboration in the peer group

Collaboration in the peer group is based on the framework conditions of mentoring (see Chapter 1) and is therefore characterized by the fact that the participants treat each other with respect and as equals. Non-competition, confidentiality, and openness are guiding characteristics of the collaboration. In order for peer group mentoring to succeed, regular meetings in which all members actively participate are central (recommended interval: every four to six weeks). After each meeting, notes from the meeting should be sent to the program management (see Notes for peer group meeting), in which the results and experiences of the peer group are briefly recorded and reflected upon. This is a meta-level summary. Confidential contents will not be communicated to the program management!

At the first peer group meeting, expectations are established and common goals are clearly discussed. The goals and joint activities that a peer group agrees on are very individual. The following list represents only a small selection of possibilities and ideas that can be implemented and continuously supplemented within the framework of peer group mentoring:

- Themed meetings (on work-life-balance, grant writing, time-management, etc.)
- Inviting people with relevant expertise or background to peer group meetings
- Joint reading and analysis of relevant literature (e.g. on scientific writing and publishing)
- Writing workshop or feedback session on job applications
- Developing networking strategies or a collective visit to a networking event
- Collegial counseling

In case of conflict or questions, the program management is always available to support the peer group.

Checklist peer group: What do you need for good collaboration?

- ✓ Agreed confidentiality
- ✓ Clear expectations and goals
- ✓ Clear rules of collaboration
- ✓ At each meeting: Determine minute taker, agree on location/ room/time and, if necessary, goal or topic for the next meeting.
- ✓ Regular interim reviews: What is going well? What do we want to change? What else do I want from the group? What can I contribute? What have we already achieved?

4. AdvanceMent Freiburg: What, When and How?

4.1 Program structure

AdvanceMent Freiburg consists of two program tracks, each with up to twelve mentees:

- **@academia** is aimed at those who wish to pursue a career in academia.
- **@newpathways** is aimed at those who wish to pursue a career in industry and society.
- **@flexability** is aimed at those who wish to participate a English program with flexible entry.

AdvanceMent Freiburg runs for approximately 14 months and is based on four elements: mentoring, networking, qualification and counseling. The one-on-one and peer group mentoring is also reinforced by a program which is designed to support the mentoring process. This consists of an introductory workshop to prepare for the mentoring, a festive kick-off event, an interim and final evaluation workshop, and a closing event with awarding of a certificate. Participation in the support program, the qualification workshops, and the final evaluation to further develop the program is mandatory for mentees.

Mentoring: One-on-One und peer group mentoring

AdvanceMent Freiburg combines the classic one-on-one mentoring relationship between mentee and mentor with peer counseling in the peer group. The mentees actively engage with their questions and problems in both the mentoring tandem and their peer group in order to learn and develop together. The mentoring tandems and the peer group meet in a self-organized manner at regular intervals during the mentoring year (recommended interval: every four to eight weeks).

The mentoring partnership is limited to the duration of the mentoring round. Mentoring partners may decide to continue their relationship informally at the end of the program. However, it is recommended at this point to take on new roles and determine an end to the mentoring relationship.

The mentees are actively involved in the search for and selection of a suitable mentor. This begins as early as the application stage by addressing the question of what expectations one has of the process, what goals one is pursuing, and who might be able to support one in these goals. In the introductory workshop, these topics are dealt with in greater depth in order to achieve the best possible match between mentee and mentor.

Networking

The program promotes networking among mentees and with other professionals within and outside the university through network meetings, informative events, and expert discussions with speakers from academia and business (e.g. career lounge, biography talk).

Qualification

A workshop on career planning is a fixed component of both program tracks. Depending on the target group and program track, other workshops are also held, e.g. on the topics of leadership, resilience or job application training. More detailed information can be found in the schedule of the two program tracks.

Furthermore, workshops from the FRS qualification program for doctoral candidates and from the GDaPE qualification program for postdocs can be attended, if personally relevant (on topics such as time, project or conflict management, communication, publishing, etc.). Workshops from the qualification programs attended during the program can be included in the mentoring certificate.

Counseling

Mentees benefit from a wide range of counseling services that are available in addition to mentoring to assist with orientation, decision-making, and skills development. These include:

- Accompanying advice from the program management
- Peer counseling within the peer groups
- Individual consulting services with coaches in the context of career planning workshops
- Possibility to participate in coaching (doctoral candidates, postdocs) and consulting services (doctoral candidates, postdocs) offered by the FRS (doctoral candidates) and the GDaPE (postdocs)

4.2 Overview of the phases of AdvanceMent



The AdvanceMent Freiburg team hopes that these guidelines support you in successfully structuring the mentoring program and wishes all participants a lot of fun and success with their cooperation

5. Notes on Materials: Checklists and Templates

For a successful mentoring experience, it is important to have a well-structured mentoring process, to communicate expectations clearly and to prepare for and reflect upon individual steps. AdvanceMent Freiburg has therefore put together a collection of materials and templates for your use. The materials include the following documents:

- Mentoring-Agreement AdvanceMent – Mentee
- Mentoring-Agreement Mentor – Mentee
- Checklist Mentee: The first meeting
- Notes on and preparation for mentoring conversations
- Notes for peer group meeting
- Checklist: rules of feedback
- Checklist: interim review in mentoring
- Checklist: systemic questions for mentors

The mentoring agreements between AdvanceMent and the mentees govern the general conditions for participation in the program. In addition, a mentoring agreement is established between mentor and mentee, in which both sides agree on formal conditions and the substantive focus of their mentoring collaboration. The checklists help to prepare for the first meeting and to familiarize oneself with feedback rules and general issues. Documents are also provided for preparing and subsequently reflecting on mentoring discussions and peer group meetings.

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For further literature see:

www.forum-mentoring.de/index.php/mentoring_top/mentoring/publikationen/

7. Imprint

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